

## Questionnaires to EBCC Delegates 2011 Summary Report

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### Introduction

The European Bird Census Council EBCC plans a new Atlas of Breeding Birds in Europe. As part of the planning process the Steering Committee approached the EBCC national delegates with a questionnaire in order to get background information on the situation in individual countries. The questionnaire was accompanied by a short project information. Both documents are found in the annex. The main objectives of the questionnaires were:

- to inform the EBCC network on the planned atlas
- to investigate whether countries are interested to contribute
- to create a list of national contact persons and possible atlas coordinators
- to update our knowledge on recently published existing national atlases
- to receive information on planned national atlases
- to explore possibilities of collaboration and needs for support
- to get an overview on existing national online platforms to collect data.

This summary report presents a summary of the answers received. The EBBA2 Steering Committee would like to thank the many people who helped fill the questionnaires in their country.

### Scope

The questionnaires were sent out to EBCC delegates in 46 countries. In a few cases, where EBCC has no delegates or when we did not get a response, other persons, mainly from the BirdLife network, were contacted. Delegates were encouraged to contact other persons in the country where appropriate and to send back one questionnaire per country.

Questionnaires were sent out on 31 October 2011, followed by reminders in December and January. By 9 February 2012, when the results were presented at the Birds in Europe 3 Meeting in Mikulov, Czech Republic, we had received answers from 42 countries. We got no response from Andorra, Armenia, Georgia and Malta. In three cases, two questionnaires were sent back from the same country.

## Existing atlases

In many countries, at least one national atlas has been produced so far (Fig. 1). Gaps exist mainly in eastern and southeastern Europe. Overall, 12 countries have never produced a national atlas. A few countries have just finished fieldwork for their first, second or even third national atlas.

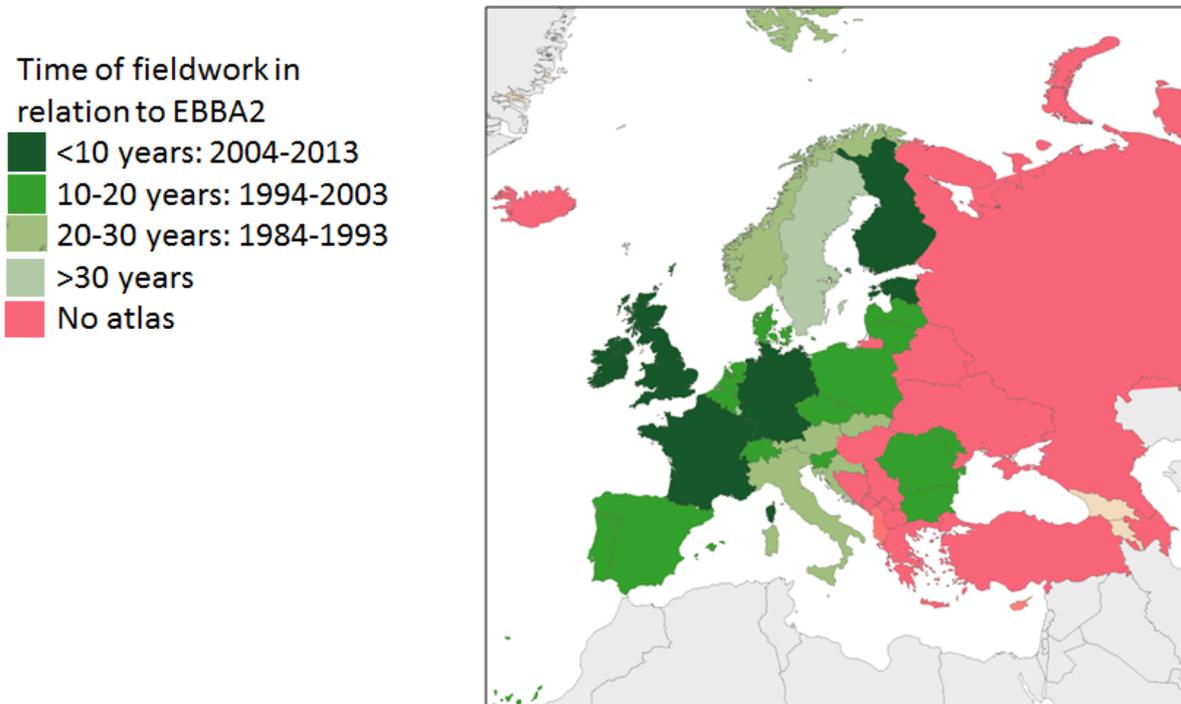


Fig. 1. Existing national atlases of bird distribution in Europe.

## Planned atlases

In 17 countries, fieldwork for a new atlas is planned to take place during the planned core data collection period for the European atlas (2013-2017): Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Italy, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland, Russia (European part), Serbia, Spain, Switzerland and The Netherlands (fig. 2). In the following countries the situation is yet unclear or they mentioned plans for an atlas but without an indication of the time period for data collection: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Azerbaijan, Hungary, Norway, Slovakia,

Grid size for most national atlases planned or recently finished is 10x10 km (Table 1). Some small countries have chosen a smaller grid, while some large countries, especially those with low observer densities, choose a 50x50 km grid.

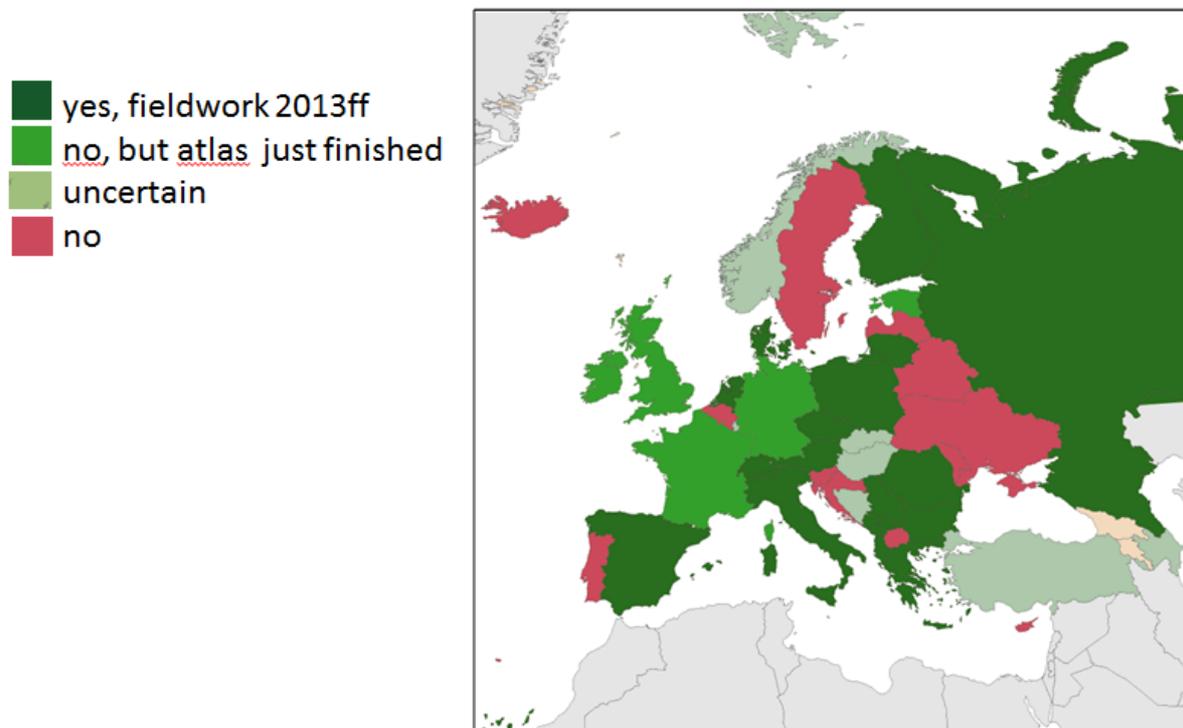


Fig. 2. Atlases planned in the time period c. 2013-2017.

Table 1: Grid size of planned atlases. In italics: grid size of most recent atlas (only atlases after 2000).

Country	50x50 km	10x10 km	other	Comments
Albania	50x50			
Andorra				No answer
Armenia				No answer
Austria		10x10		
Azerbaijan	50x50			
Belarus				No atlas planned
Belgium			8/5x5	8x5 (Wallonia), 5x5 (Flanders)
Bosnia and Herzegovina				Not yet known
Bulgaria		10x10		
Croatia				No atlas
Cyprus				No atlas
Czech Republic			12x11.1	
Denmark			5x5	
Estonia			5x5	
Finland		10x10		
France		10x10		
Georgia				No answer
Germany			12x12	
Greece		10x10		
Hungary		10x10		
Iceland				No atlas
Ireland		10x10		
Italy		10x10		
Latvia			5x5	
Liechtenstein		10x10		Smaller grid in evaluation
Lithuania		10x10		
Luxembourg				No atlas
Malta				No answer
Macedonia				No atlas
Republic of Moldova			25x25	

Country	50x50 km	10x10 km	other	Comments
Montenegro		10x10		
Norway				Uncertain, old atlas 10x10
Poland		10x10		
Portugal		10x10		
Romania		10x10		
Russian Federation	50x50			
Serbia				Not yet known
Slovak Republic				Older atlas: c. 12 x11 km (10 ° long x 6 ° lat
Slovenia		10x10		
Spain		10x10		
Sweden				No atlas
Switzerland		10x10		
The Netherlands			5x5	
Turkey				No atlas
Ukraine			25x25	
United Kingdom		10x10		

## Data provision for EBBA2

All countries that replied want to contribute to the new European atlas.

For those countries that plan a national atlas (partly) covering the period 2013-2017 and those that have just finished fieldwork for their atlas, data can be directly used for a European atlas (in some cases updated with recent data from other sources). A few smaller countries should be able to extract data from their databases at a scale of 50x50 km without a need to carry out extra fieldwork (Fig. 3). For the other countries that do not intend to make a national atlas, specific fieldwork will have to be carried out although most of these indicated that for certain species, in particular species of conservation concern or colonial species, data are available, and fieldwork will have to be carried out for only part of the species. Of course, fieldwork will also have to be carried out in countries with planned atlases.

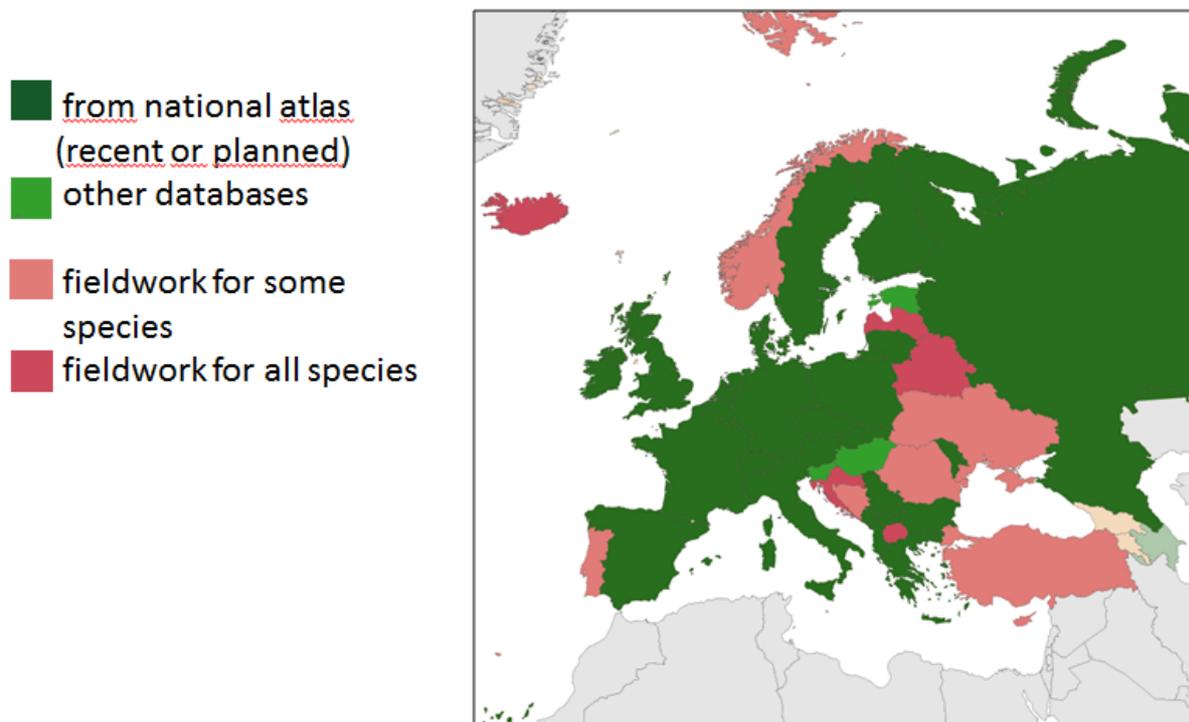


Fig. 3. Possibilities of contributing presence-absence data for a European atlas at a scale of 50x50 km

## Support from outside country needed

Most western and some central European countries indicated that they will be able to organise fieldwork without support from outside the country (fig. 2). Some countries did comment, however, that funding was not yet secured. A few other countries will need funding from outside their own country but otherwise have enough capacities to carry out fieldwork. In east and southeast Europe the situation is more difficult. These countries need support in terms of material (binoculars, field guides), advice for planning, computing, database management. Several countries would also appreciate the help of foreign observers. Funding requirements most often referred to money to cover expenses for fieldwork in remote areas or to pay the salaries of atlas coordinators.

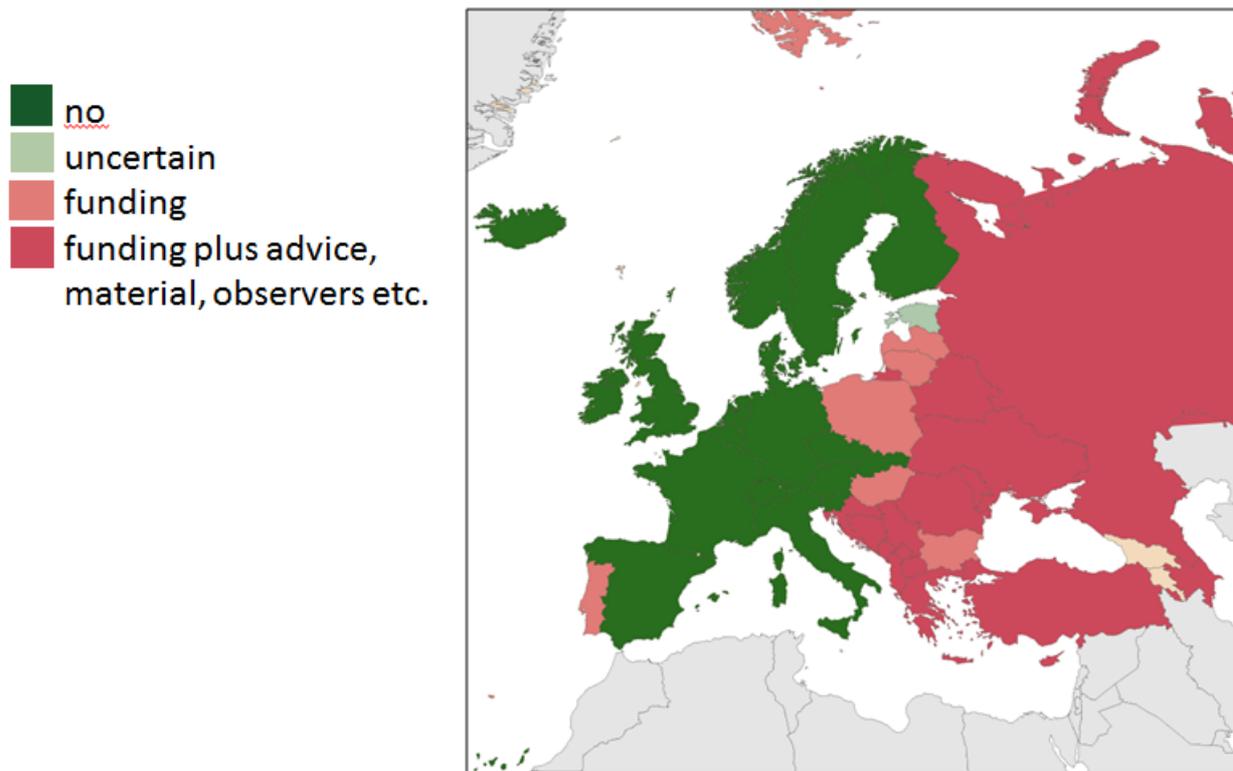


Fig. 4. Support from outside country needed.

## Online platforms for data collection

Online platforms play an increasingly important role in collecting data from amateur birdwatchers but also professionals. In many countries they are focused on collecting casual observations but in some they have been extended to meet the specific requirements for data collection for a national atlas.

Online platforms have so far been established mostly in western European countries that have large numbers of amateur birdwatchers. Several systems exist in parallel. In western Europe, the ornitho platform (with some national adaptations) currently covers the largest number of countries (Switzerland, France, Italy, Catalonia, Germany and Luxembourg). Most other countries have developed their own system. With Bulgaria and Turkey, two countries in southeast Europe have indicated a national platform, both under the worldbird.org system developed by RSPB. According to the worldbirds.org site platforms also exist for some countries that answered “no platform”, which probably indicates that they are not well used or linked to national databases.

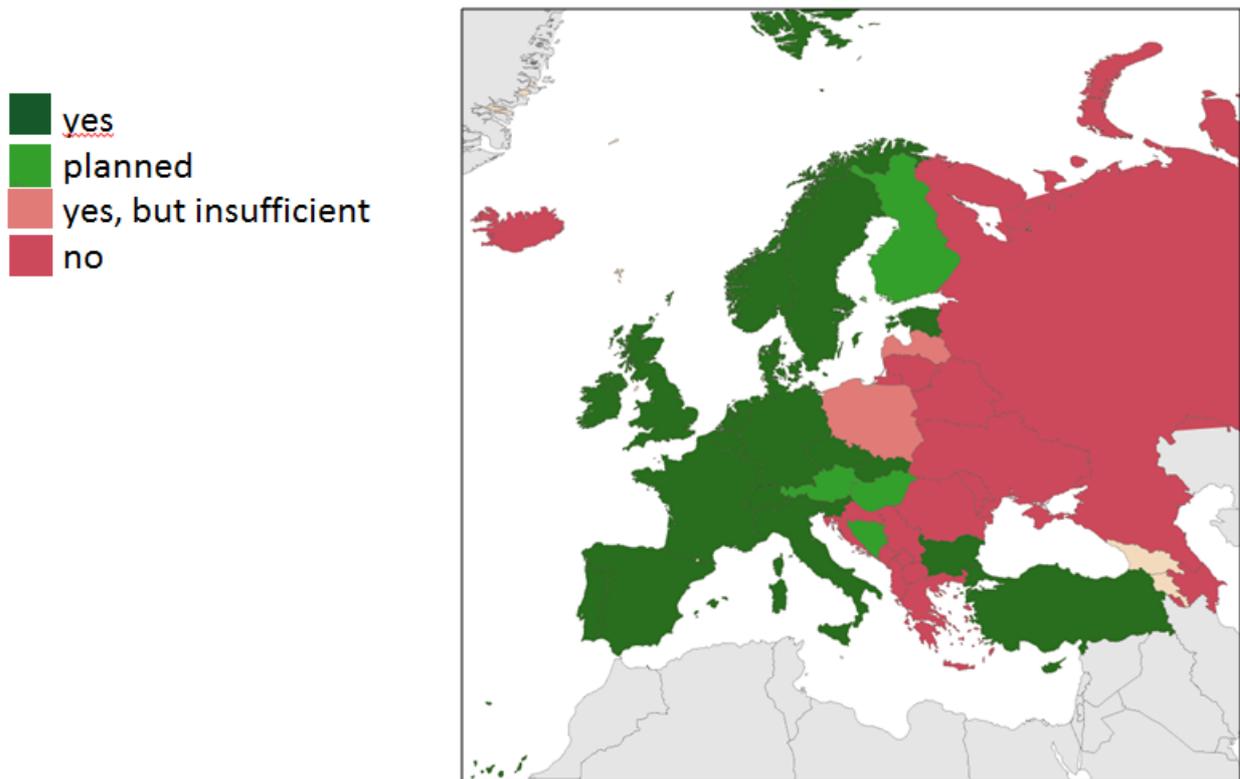


Fig. 5. Existing national online platforms for the collection of bird observations.

## Conclusions

The answers to the questionnaires showed the enthusiasm of the ornithological community to repeat and improve the first EBCC atlas, now considered out of date. The general comments by many contributors highlight the important points to take further:

*“I would like to congratulate the EBCC for the EBBA2 initiative. It is scientifically relevant, socially urgent and technically audacious.”*

*“The new atlas is necessary to monitor the population status of breeding birds.”*

A clear necessity to provide up-to-date information on the distribution of breeding birds in Europe has been recognised. New possibilities to include parts of Europe that were missing for the first atlas, in particular European Russia and adjacent countries as well as Turkey, will greatly improve the coverage.

*“I think that survey methods for new atlas should be developed by EBCC & Co. and harmonized (implemented) across countries starting new atlas.”*

A wish for EBCC to guide planning and data collection is coming in particular from countries in east and southeast Europe that plan their first national atlas. The Steering Committee will give high priority to the development of guidelines.

*“New atlas has not been planned due to shortage of human and financial resources.”*

This comment highlights the general need for support in countries where the number of observers is small and surveys are difficult due to the size of the country, the remoteness of many areas or political difficulties. The Steering Committee will take these requirements into account when looking for funds. However, in many cases alternative ways should be explored, e.g. bilateral agreements between countries, regional funds etc. We encourage in particular delegates from western European countries to explore possibilities to join forces with partners in other regions.

*“We are looking very much forward to contributing to the EBBA2”*

EBCC is very grateful for the encouraging feedback to the plans for a new European atlas. While we are planning work at the continent-wide level, a lot of work has to be done within countries. We look forward to collaborating with the wide network across Europe.

This questionnaire was a very first step to explore possibilities of collaboration within the EBCC network. It focused mainly on the broadest scale of providing data to create a 50x50 km atlas. Discussions are underway to explore possibilities to go beyond these basic requirements, in particular by adding information that would allow more fine-scaled relative-abundance maps. Making a modern bird atlas covering the whole of Europe is a challenge but with the support of the whole EBCC network and partners outside the network we are confident that this can be achieved.